

MsCohen

Hi Jennifer! How exciting!

JenniferHardy

Hi Ms.Cohen!

JenniferHardy

I have a few questions about my paper

MsCohen

No problem, it's what I'm here for. I saw your comment on the Discuss! page. What is your thesis/central idea?

JenniferHardy

It is basically about how self-determination and freedom have negative and positive relationships (s determined person gains freedom easier than someone with little determination)

MsCohen

Okay. Interesting. This is actually similar to what Willene and Anisha, in block 4, have been talking about in their papers.

JenniferHardy

ooh...is that bad?

MsCohen

After we talk, I recommend looking at their chat on the block 4 wiki:
<https://cohensclass04.wikispaces.com/Research+Paper+Feedback>

MsCohen

well, all of you are in a BROAD realm. You definitely need to get more specific and concrete. Then I think you will have more to say

MsCohen

For any argument you make, consider the "ideal" to be that you should FULLY cover it in your paper

MsCohen

Meaning you should make it narrow and specific enough that you can fully show the range of views/opinions on the issue

MsCohen

To do this in 6 - 8 pages, the topic needs to pretty small

MsCohen

By the way, I will post the transcript of this chat to Cohen Handouts and if you want to post as notes on your class wiki, feel free

JenniferHardy

I think thats the problem. I dont know how to make that more broad. My main arguments are: when determined to gain a certain freedom, people tend to go out of their way to achieve it. On the other hand, when there is little or no self-determination, the goal is not as clearly set and the freedom, as a result, comes slower

JenniferHardy

I have a lot of examples but it is still only 2 1/2 pages

MsCohen

No-- LESS broad

MsCohen

The issue of freedom/choice, if you were to research everything written about that out there, would fill 3 - 4 rooms of text

JenniferHardy

haha oops that's what I meant

MsCohen

One way is to make it more concrete. Are you writing about high school students? American workers? Poor people? Rich people? Girls? Boys?

JenniferHardy

I was thinking along the lines of everyone. I didn't really narrow it

MsCohen

ahh. There you go. To get some ideas on how to narrow, there is a Radiolab on the issue of "Choice" (there are also some on "Who Am I?" and how we define the self/soul): <http://www.radiolab.org/2008/nov/17/>

MsCohen

And what is your "core essay"?

MsCohen

You may also look for ideas on narrowing at the random list of links related to the core readings I posted on the Lang and Comp page:

<http://cohenhandouts.wikispaces.com/Language+and+Composition#DAILY%20ACTIVITIES--The%20%22If-You're-Still-Looking-for-a-Source-Here-It-Is%22%20Post>

JenniferHardy

Learning to Read and Write

MsCohen

ahhh.


MsCohen

I posted a lot of interesting Douglass resources

JenniferHardy

Ok I'll look at those. I just thought that my arguments were good for the core essay

MsCohen

you can also get some ideas on the specifics of the arguments he makes in "Learning to Read" here: [ComleyFields8eIM.pdf](#) 

MsCohen

pages 6 and 7

MsCohen

I think you're going in an interesting direction, but you need to narrow to a topic that you can more fully "cover" in a brief essay. Right now your topic would take a book to adequately respond to

MsCohen	Something interesting Douglass writes about in the excerpt is whether he will ever really escape slavery
JenniferHardy	But even with my topic, I could only write the 2 pages.
MsCohen	I would say you are not really covering that topic then. To truly research and write about the topic you are proposing would be quite long. To see, try googling some of the key words in your thesis and see how many results you get
MsCohen	https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ix=heb&ie=UTF-8&ion=1#sclient=psy-ab&hl=en&safe=off&site=webhp&source=hp&q=when%20determined%20to%20gain%20a%20certain%20freedom%2C%20people%20tend%20to%20go%20out%20of%20their%20way%20to%20achieve%20it&pbx=1&oq=&aq=&aqi=&aql=&gs_sm=&gs_upl=&fp=d78f1931343e85c2&ix=heb&ion=1&ix=heb&ion=1&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_p
MsCohen	sorry, it's a big link!
JenniferHardy	So all of these links are like my thesis.
MsCohen	or things that could relate to your thesis
MsCohen	(and there are 100 million results)
JenniferHardy	Ohh that's a lot
MsCohen	What about responding specifically to this bold argument Douglass makes: "I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the

	remedy"
JenniferHardy	
	So try to come up with a question out of that?
MsCohen	You are actually experiencing a version of this, in a much smaller way, of course. It's hard to realize what your true task is and then also realize it's incredibly daunting
JenniferHardy	
	That's true
MsCohen	And yes, I think you could make a question just around that claim. But it would still need to be more specific and concrete
JenniferHardy	
	Then would I have to redo everything?
JenniferHardy	
	I was thinking about just narrowing down my current thesis so I can still use some of the same sources
MsCohen	No, you would make an informal outline for just your purposes. Sure, use sources you already have. Then proceed to the rough draft
MsCohen	
	You don't have to redo your annotated bib
JenniferHardy	
	But the thing is that I'm not sure whether or not my new question (if I think of one) will be related to my current sources
MsCohen	Yes, you may have to do some more research. That shouldn't be so bad though-- is it making the MLA citations that takes time for you? It's better to get more useful sources and revise your arguments than to stick with an argument you know is too difficult to write on

JenniferHardy	No, making citations is easy. It's finding the sources
MsCohen	Ah. I see. Not being able to find sources or finding too many? I suggest going to places like this: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting/rc5.html
MsCohen	and using JSTOR and Questia. Remember, when you find a source, look at what that source references as well to get an idea of what sources everyone who writes about a certain issue find to be authoritative
MsCohen	it also helps to identify what "domain" your topic is-- history, literature, language, science, psychology, etc.
JenniferHardy	No its just being able to find them. And I can't think of a question more concrete than the one I had before.
JenniferHardy	The domain would be possibly psychology
MsCohen	It sounds like you should go back to the looking-for-sources phase
MsCohen	This page, from Bedford, has some really helpful checklists: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting/rc1.html
JenniferHardy	I don't know what to look for
MsCohen	What about looking at some of the Frederick Douglass resources posted here: http://cohenhandouts.wikispaces.com/Language+and+Composition#DAILY%20ACTIVITIES--The%20%22If-You're-Still-Looking-for-a-Source-Here-It-Is%22%20Post

MsCohen	also, remember to take a break. Sometimes when doing research it's easy to get into a "loop" of unproductive thoughts. Take a break and return to it with a fresh eye.
JenniferHardy	It's due tomorrow though...
MsCohen	It's due Monday. And your rough draft is what is due. Really, 1 - 2 hours of productive searching/reading could yield some very useful results. For example, this one radio story on Douglass has a number of interesting arguments: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11734985
MsCohen	You can do it Jennifer! This task is within the scope of your skills and you're smart and insightful! Just narrow your scope
JenniferHardy	Thank you. Is there anyway that I can narrow my original argument?
MsCohen	Yes, many ways. It covers an incredibly broad scope. You may want to return to the Douglass excerpt though and just look for a more viable idea.
MsCohen	Review the process we've been going through again-- find the major arguments in Douglass' text, make connections to those arguments and ask questions/challenge them, and look for other sources that are in the "conversation" about the topic/argument you're interested in
JenniferHardy	What about how the slave owners did not want their slaves to read because they knew that educated slaves were dangerous
MsCohen	also go to some of the places I've linked in this chat. They have a lot of good paths. Also a big/broad argument. What about asking this question about American school kids today? What kinds of things does one learn about and start to challenge in today's society once you know how to read and think for yourself?
MsCohen	There are some that argue that many Americans with power and resources today would not benefit from a more widely educated populous. Others think that with more people educated, the more ideas will be generated and the more we'll be able to accomplish and a society

MsCohen	I pasted this line "I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing" into JSTOR and just got some interesting results
JenniferHardy	
	So something about the education of people and the advantages of that
MsCohen	advantages and disadvantages. But narrow further. For example, this article: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1170542 discusses what history textbooks should do for students
JenniferHardy	
	Narrowing things down is my problem
MsCohen	Yes, it is hard. Here is a question I just found via Google that's a "ready made" synthesis (of course, it's been done already, so you have to do something different, but it's a start and could give you some ideas): facweb.northseattle.edu/.../Practice%20With%20Sources%20.doc
MsCohen	Searching well is a skill. You're on the right track. You just have to dig a bit more. When you're doing research, you find a lot of lame, unuseful stuff, but every now and then you find something awesome
JenniferHardy	
	Don't I need a topic first before I start researching
MsCohen	Sort of, but from your search and from reading sources you then get more narrow. It's good to start broad, see what's out there, and then start to narrow based on what you're interested in.
MsCohen	again, this page really helps: http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/rewriting/rc1.html
JenniferHardy	
	These websites make me more confused
MsCohen	That's too bad

MsCohen Do what you're comfortable with, but do some good searching of some of the places we've talked about. Write down ideas as you go. 😊

JenniferHardy Ok so I want to stay in the area of my original idea. Any ideas about how to narrow that down?

MsCohen Yes, search for specific sources on that topic and start tracing the main arguments. Narrow when you find a way to

JenniferHardy I have many sources that are good. From those try to make an argument?

MsCohen Maybe, but it seems like they are covering too broad an area

JenniferHardy Most of them are talking about determination

MsCohen Okay, but this is quite broad. Also, I have to say I don't really know what you mean by "determination"-- that might be a place to start narrowing further. Do you mean "motivation" or that certain things are "determined" by genetics, upbringing, random circumstances, etc.?

JenniferHardy motivation is what I'm trying to say I guess

MsCohen Ah. okay. I just found a practice AP multiple choice book that goes through asking good questions about a Frederick Douglass passage:
[MasterAPEnglishLanguage.pdf](#) ⓘ (then CNTRL + F for "Douglass")

MsCohen A lot of people research motivation: educators, psychologists, economists

JenniferHardy

It wouldn't let me search

MsCohen

I'm not sure how you're viewing it. Most pdf's are searchable. Here's another source on Douglass as a journalist:

http://academics.smcvt.edu/dmindich/understanding_frederick_douglass.htm It has a comprehensive set of works cited in the footnotes

MsCohen

There's a lot out there. It's up to you to ask questions that will narrow the field of research. Is this difficult? Yes. But can you do it? Absolutely.